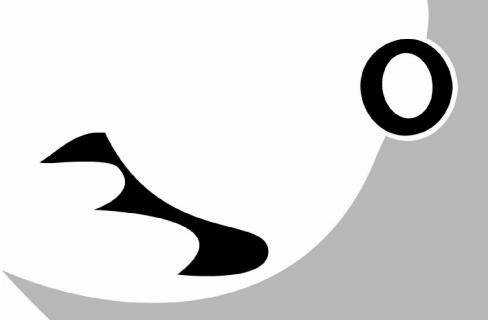
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erip county commission on the status of women sy of Audrey Czesal.

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# WOMEN BELOW 30 2005 REPORT

Wb30 Interns
Elizabeth Bailey
Stephanie Connors
Emily Hunt
Bridgette Jackson

Wb30 Report Committee
Latricia Chisholm
Amitra Hodge
Janna Willoughby





September 2005

Dear colleague,

Thank you for taking the time to read the **Wb30 Report**. This report was designed, assembled, and marketed by volunteers, in a vast community effort that suggests the vast untapped volunteer workforce waiting to be called to action in Erie County. It is our aim to empower women age 21 to 30 living in Erie County by helping them both assess, and address, their own needs. In doing so, we are also able to contribute to the revitalization of the Greater Buffalo region, and mobilize a new generation of volunteers. Above all, we may finally begin to stop the brain drain that is plaguing our area, as our best and brightest youth leave to pursue a better quality of life outside of Western New York.

The Wb30 Report is a needs assessment of women who are age 21-30 and who live in Erie County. What makes our project so special is that we opted to ask young women what they felt their priority issues were, rather than simply observing and coming to our own conclusions as researchers. Using surveys and focus groups, we engaged young women in the identification of their top issues. The three core issues identified by our research are: finances, careers, and networking. With the help of graduate students from Buffalo State College, we conducted solution groups to engage the community as a whole in generating ideas for addressing these three issues.

This report contains the significant findings of our survey, peppered with supporting evidence from our focus groups, and an abundance of realistic, low-cost ideas for action, generated by the community during our solution groups. It is our hope that the Wb30 report is an eye-opener for the community, a catalyst for action, and a guide towards what that action might look like. We also hope that the spirit of volunteerism and low-cost opportunities for change that drives our work will inspire our readers and the greater community to avoid getting caught up in budgetary pitfalls by reinforcing efforts to enlist the voluntary support of Erie County's younger generations.

The next step belongs to you.

Sincerely,

The Women below 30 Advisory Board

Latricia Chisholm, MS., Chair
Dara B. Biltekoff, Esq., Vice Chair
Christopher Spicer, Secretary
Mawusi Watson, Commission Liaison
Dr. Maritza Baez, MD
Katie McHugh Connolly
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Tara Vogel
Janna-Ruth Willoughby
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

2004-2005 Wb30 Advisory Board

Latricia Chisholm, Chair
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Thank you to the following individuals...

Dr. Geraldine Bard • Amy Bush • Tony Conte • Clotilde Perez Bode Dedecker • Kathleen Donato • Heidi Estrada • Victor Gonzalez • Leah Halton • Tom Hodiak, Jr. • New York State Assembly member Sam Hoyt • Lori Morreale • Hideki Muneyoshi • The Honorable E. Jeanette Ogden • Cindy Odom • Hector Ramos • Suzanna J. Ramos • Gina Ross • Scott Saxon • Todd Schoepflin

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Special thanks to all the young women in Erie County who contributed their ideas to this report through the surveys, focus groups, or solution groups. Thank you for being so open with your ideas and generous with your trust. You made this report possible.

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# INTRODUCTION



# History

The Erie County Commission on the Status of Women was established by a unanimous vote of the Erie County Legislature in 1987. From July 1988 to the present, the Commission has released 19 publications, conducted four community surveys, worked with over 60 interns, and supported over 60 government-appointed Commissioners. Over the years, the Commission has explored the areas of women in the workplace, gender equity on municipal and not-for-profit boards, the improvement of local response systems for victims of domestic violence, women's health, socio-economic issues, and career development.

In August 2004, the Commission held its annual strategic planning retreat. The result of this session was a unanimous decision to make outreach to the younger generation of women the Commission's top priority for 2005. In September 2004, Elizabeth Bailey joined the Commission staff as coordinator of this new priority. County interns Bridgette Jackson and Emily Hunt joined Elizabeth to form a specialized intern team. The group met several times a week, and in less than sixty days, developed the "Women below 30 Initiative," better known by its catchy initials, Wb30.

After two months of planning, meeting, and networking, the Wb30 team presented a thirty-page project proposal to the Commission that outlined the Wb30 Initiative. It included a large-scale Needs Assessment Research Project designed to assess the needs of the target population, women ages 21 to 30. The vision of the initiative was that "The Erie County Commission on the Status of Women will be aware of the issues affecting 21-30 year-old female residents of Erie County, and work to address the needs of this population." The Wb30 interns planned to achieve this vision through the following three-fold mission statement:

To introduce the CSW to the 21-30 year-old female population residing in Erie County;

To assess the needs of this population;

To engage the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women in addressing the priority needs of this population.

In addition to completing its proposal, the team also assembled a diverse advisory board of 15 men and women to oversee the Wb30 Initiative and to advise the Commission on matters related to the target population. The proposal was presented to several meetings of community organizations, revised, and put into action on December 1, 2004.

Five months, 594 surveys, 5 focus groups, 3 solution groups, and over 750 men and women volunteers later, we believe that our findings are crucial to the decisions of policy makers and service providers everywhere. This report will be updated periodically to ensure that the needs of the 21 to 30 year old female population of Erie County continue to be addressed in the future. Furthermore, the Wb30 Advisory Board will continue to monitor the target age group and report to policy makers, service providers, and the Commission itself.



## Why Women 21-30?

The isolation of our target population was a daunting task. In order to lend scientific value to our study, it was necessary to narrow down our population by identifying an upper and lower age limit. In order to determine the most vulnerable population with the most to gain from such a study, we eliminated the years in which young women are supported by other community institutions. For example, the widely popular Girl Scouts program in Western New York allows young women to participate as scouts until the age of 17, or the end of high school. Traditionally, that is the age when young women enter higher education and fall onto the safety net of another social institution that provides support and services. We chose 21 as the minimum age because at 21, traditional college students are finishing their degrees and entering the "real-world." Unlike their experiences in primary, secondary, or higher education, this time in their life is devoid of any support structures.

We do not mean that women experience a *permanent* lack of institutional support after college. Within ten to fifteen years after leaving school, most women have built strong social networks through work, service activities, new family structures and other social outlets. Therefore, we decided to cap our target population at age 30. By age 30, many women have found a career path, cemented an adult social network, and created their own family support structure.

It could be argued that 18 and 19 year-olds experience issues similar to those of 21 year-olds, and that a 34 year-old woman may not have found her career of choice or started a family. The same logic can be applied to 21-30 year-old men. This accurate reflection supports our belief that this study will benefit a far wider audience than the 21-30 year-old female population in Erie County. However, time and scientific constraints required us to narrow down our target population by age and sex. It is our hope that the Wb30 Report will reach far beyond our target population.



### Mission Statement

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of Women Below 30 is threefold:

To introduce the CSW to the 21-30 year-old female population residing in Erie County;

To assess the needs of this population;

To engage the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women in addressing the priority needs of this population.

#### Vision Statement

#### **VISION STATEMENT**

The Erie County Commission on the Status of Women will be aware of the issues affecting 21-30 year-old female residents of Erie County, and work to address the needs of this population.

# METHODOLOGY



#### **Overview**

The goal of the Needs Assessment Research Project was to determine the key issues facing the 21-30 year-old female population of Erie County. In the past, the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women has conducted widespread surveys of women in the County, but the Commission has never before studied the 21 to 30 year-old age group. The Needs Assessment was completed between December 2004 and March 2005, and was broken up into three stages:

Stage 1: Countywide Survey (December 2004)

Stage 2: Focus Groups (January 2005) Stage 3: Solution Groups (March 2005)

#### Total participants:

Survey: 589 21-30 year-old women residents of Erie County

Focus Groups: 26 21-30 year-old women residents of Erie County

Solution Groups: 9 Men and women of all ages, residents of Erie County

How

woul d

<u>you</u>

respond?

You can find a

copy of the

survey we used at

the end of this

report in

Appendix B.



## The Survey

#### Participant Population

Surveys were only considered valid if taken by women age 21-30 residing in Erie County. "Residing" was defined as "currently living in," which allowed students at the State University of New York at Buffalo to participate. The University at Buffalo student population is only 30% local students, with the other 70% of the student body coming from outside Erie County. To avoid skewing the results, we focused most of our survey efforts in other locations.

#### Solicitation of Participants

We solicited survey participants in the following three ways:

<u>Unattended survey box</u>: Brightly-colored boxes with surveys and fact sheets were placed in various community locations, like restaurants, bookstores, coffee shops, clothing stores, and municipal buildings around the greater Buffalo area. Each box was marked by a sign asking young women to complete one of our surveys. Completed surveys were retrieved periodically. A complete list of the unattended survey box locations may be found in **Appendix A**.

Attended survey tables: We set up attractive tables and large signs at malls, municipal buildings and community events. There was at least one volunteer sitting at the table at all times to answer questions and encourage survey participation. A complete list of the events we surveyed may be found in **Appendix A**.

<u>Personal connections</u>: The Wb30 Advisory Board and other volunteers distributed surveys among their family, friends and clientele. Some surveys were completed over the phone.

# The Survey

A copy of the Wb30 survey may be found in **Appendix B**. The survey was anonymous.

In order to construct a survey that was friendly to every possible woman in our target group, the surveys were available in both English and Spanish, and were written at a 4<sup>th</sup>-grade reading level. Dr. Geraldine Bard of Buffalo State College's Project F.L.I.G.H.T. conducted a readability analysis on the survey to validate the literacy grade level. In addition, we used inclusive language such as "married / life partner," and the option of choosing "less than high school" as one's educational background. Finally, we presented the survey to a local sociologist, a Spanish language professional, the Erie County Women's Action Coalition (a coalition of the leaders of over 100 women's organizations in Erie County) and the Wb30 Advisory Board for further input.

## Validating Surveys

Our final data analysis only included the 594 surveys on which the participant listed a city/town/village within Erie County, and also circled either age 21-25 or 26-30.



# Focus Groups

#### Participant Population

All focus group participants were women ages 21-30 residing in Erie County. Participants were promised confidentiality, and were cautioned not to share their last names or employer names during the groups.

#### Solicitation of Participants

In late November 2004, we began to solicit focus group participants. We placed community ads in several local newspapers, and ran Public Service Announcements on several Buffalo area radio stations. In addition, several newspapers interviewed the Wb30 team and ran articles on the project, providing further publicity for our solicitation efforts. A complete list of press hits can be found in **Appendix D**. We also asked survey participants to volunteer to participate in focus groups at our attended survey tables.

#### The Focus Group

A copy of the script used in every Wb30 focus group can be found in **Appendix C**.

All of the focus groups followed the same script, and were held at neutral locations during the month of January 2005. The focus groups took place at the Gloria J. Parks Community Center in Buffalo, the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, and Crane Library in Buffalo. Each group took an average of one hour and twenty minutes. A trained moderator and a note-taker attended every group, and every group was tape-recorded to ensure the accuracy of the data. Each moderator went through a two-hour training session in which they learned to refrain from asking leading questions, and how to implement conflict resolution strategies during a focus group. We provided cookies and water for every participant. At the end of each group, participants were encouraged to sign up to attend solution groups in March 2005. All of the Wb30 focus groups ended with positive and excited feedback about the Wb30 initiative from the participants.

Focus group participants were sorted into groups according to age: groups were either 21-25 or 26-30. This allowed for a slightly higher level of homogeneity among the ideas presented, although we found no great difference in results between the two age groups.



# Solution Groups

Each solution group had a topic based on the preliminary results of the surveys. The idea was to invite community members to brainstorm next-step ideas to address the top issues as identified by the survey results. For example, one solution group was titled, "Bills, Bills, Bills" and covered budgeting, debt, and other financial difficulties experienced by women 21-30. We invited graduate students from the Buffalo State College Program in Creative Studies to facilitate each of the solution groups, and they applied advanced facilitation techniques directly from their studies. Each group generated over a hundred solution ideas, and then narrowed them down to five core solutions.

The participants were asked to set the criteria by which the ideas would be generated. Next, participants used post-its to display their ideas and piggyback on the ideas of other participants. The final stage of the solution group was to identify a small number of particularly excellent ideas that best represented the views and ideas of the participants.





#### Overview of the Respondents

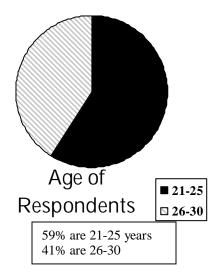
589 female residents of Erie County completed the questionnaire.

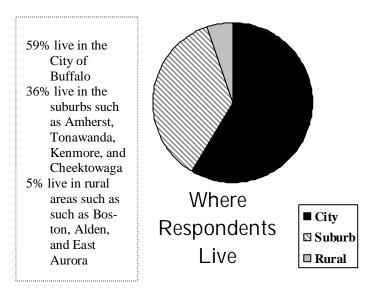
Approximately 60% of the sample were between the ages of 21 and 25 years; had no children (68%); and were single (75%).

In terms of location, the respondent pool was representative of the population of Erie County. A majority of the respondents (59%) lived in the city of Buffalo and considered themselves white (69%).

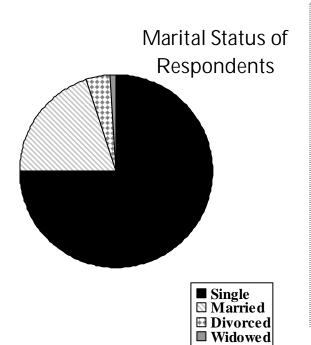
Every effort was made to ensure that the sample represented the many racial and ethnic groups of Erie County. Our sample includes nearly double the census-designated percentage of non-whites (according to the 2000 census).

The respondents' level of education was positively skewed; a majority of the respondents attended college.









Marital Status reflects the survey distribution sites. Surveys were distributed at colleges. According to our data, traditional college students in Erie County were more likely to be single.

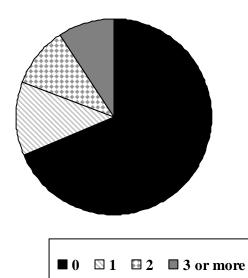
Women between the ages of 21-30 years were more likely to enroll in college, persist in studies, graduate, and pursue professional and graduate degrees than men between the ages of 21-30 years. The decision to marry and have children is postponed for this population. Birth control, changes in the job market, and female preference to higher education also contributes to the demographic patterns found in our respondent pool.

- 75% were Single
- 20% were Married
- 4% were Divorced
- 1 was a Widow

#### • 68% had no children

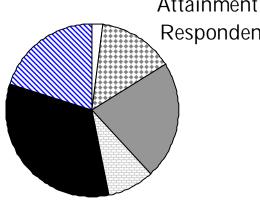
- 12% had one child
- 10% had two children
- 9% had three or more children

### Number of Children







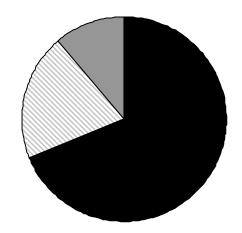


- Erie County data shows that 25% of residents have, at least, a Bachelor's degree
- 96 respondents have not attended college
   2% with 8th grade or less
   14% have a high school diploma or G.E.D.
- Majority of respondents are college educated 22% have completed some college 9% have an associate's degree 33% have a bachelor's degree 20% have graduate/professional degrees

□ 8th Grade
 □ HS/GED
 □ Some College
 □ Associate's
 □ Bachelor's
 □ Grad/Professional

# Racial / Ethnic Background of Respondents

69% are White Americans
20% are Black Americans
11% are categorized as other:
Hispanics (3%)
Asians (2%)
Native Americans (1%)
Biracial (5%)





# Top Issues

Respondents were provided with a list of 21 common issues, as well as the option to write in an additional issue. They were asked to choose up to five issues that they currently face in their daily lives. The top seven issues listed below were chosen by at least 30% of the survey respondents.

- 1. Earning Enough Money for Bills 42%
- 2. Paying for Education 42%
- 3. Finding a Job 38%
- 4. Debt 36%
- 5. Health Insurance 34%
- 6. Continuing Education 32%
- 7. Career Development 32%

These seven issues can be categorized into three themes:

- 1. Finances
  - Earning Enough Money to Pay My Bills
  - Paying for Education
  - Debt
  - Finding a Job
  - Health Insurance
- 2. Career
  - Continuing Education
  - Career Development
- 3. Networking

The following section highlights the significant findings related to each of these three themes. Due to the large quantity of data that resulted from our study, we did not include scientifically insignificant findings in this report.



# Money/Budgeting

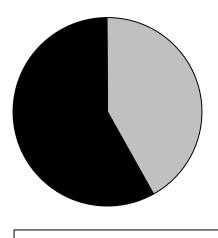
# Earning Enough Money to Pay My Bills

42% of the respondents identified earning enough money for bills as an important issue. 57% of those respondents who circled live in the city of Buffalo. A majority (64%) of the 21-25 year-old respondents chose this issue.

Respondents with at least a high school education are more likely to identify this category as a concern than other education levels.

Black American respondents are more likely to identify with this concern than any other racial/ethnic group.

According to Facts About Women in Erie County, NY published by the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women (2003), White Americans (47%) are more likely to live below poverty than Black Americans (32%)

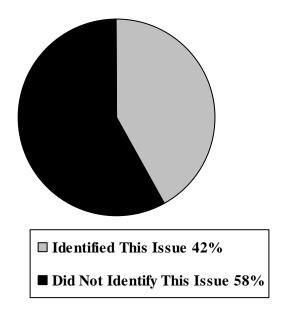


- ☐ Identified This Issue 42%
- Did Not Identify This Issue 58%



# Paying for Education

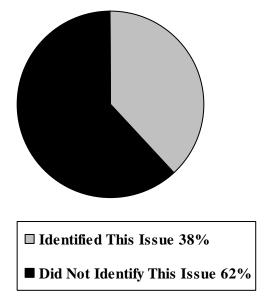
42% of respondents identified *paying for education* as an important issue. The overwhelming majority of respondents who identified this as an important issue were single, college-educated White Americans between the ages of 21-25, with no children.



# Finding a Job

38% of respondents identified finding a job as an important issue in their lives. Respondents between the ages of 21 and 25 were more likely to choose this issue than respondents between the ages of 26 and 30. Respondents with no children chose this issue more than respondents with children. This data suggests that college students are concerned about finding a job in Erie County upon graduation.

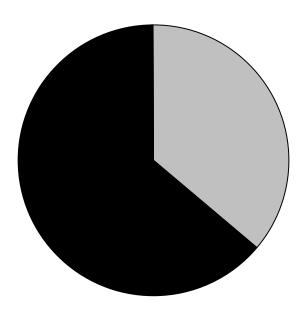
49% of those who chose this issue also need health insurance.





# Debt

36% of respondents identified getting out of debt as an important issue in their lives. The majority of White Americans who hold a bachelor's degree chose this item. 15% of single mothers identified this as an important issue in their lives.

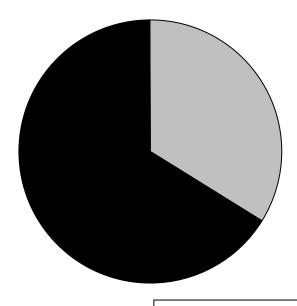


- ☐ Identified This Issue 36%
- Did Not Identify This Issue 64%
- 50% of those who chose paying for education also chose getting out of debt
- 34% of those who chose finding a job also chose getting out of debt



# Health Insurance

34% of respondents identified securing health insurance as an important issue in their lives.



- ☐ Identified This Issue 34%
- Did Not Identify This Issue 66%

Of those participants who identified this issue:

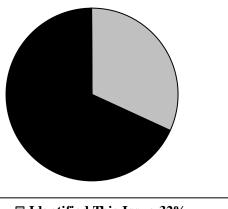
- 13% were single mothers
- 79% had no children
- 33% were White Americans
- Approximately 25% were Black Americans



# Career Development

# Continuing Education

32% of the respondents identified this issue. Respondents without at least some college education identified this issue more than any of the other categories of education. The majority of the respondents who identified this issue were White Americans.



84% of those who chose *continuing education* had not heard of the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women.

- **□** Identified This Issue 32%
- Did Not Identify This Issue 68%

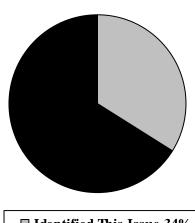
# Career Development

32% of respondents identified with this issue. Our data shows that the vast majority of respondents with at least some college education seek help with career development. White Americans chose this issue more than any other racial/ethnic groups.

Of the respondents who identified with this issue:

23% are looking for more *leadership opportunities* 

76% of those who chose *career* development have not heard of the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women.



- **Identified This Issue 34%**
- Did Not Identify This Issue 66%



# Networking

Although less than 30% of survey respondents identified *networking* as an important issue, networking was identified as important by participants in every focus group. This apparent discontinuity could be due to the fact that survey respondents were asked to prioritize their top 5 issues, whereas focus group participants were able to cover a wider variety of issues in the allotted time. Cross-tabulations were conducted using demographics and other survey items. Significant findings are as follows:

- White Americans chose networking more than the other racial/ethnic categories
- Respondents with college degrees (Bachelors and Graduate/Professional) chose networking more than the other categories of education
- 66% of the respondents who chose *networking* saw themselves living in Erie County in five years

"I think it's the women who don't seek out the resources or don't know that they are available. If we look hard enough we will find something. That's has to be such a hopeless overwhelming feeling. It's got to be. There are so many people out there that don't know to ask for help. I think that if it was more on the forefront. Like you said having all those resources there."

"That's why I think there needs to be more dialogue. Little groups are great at what they do. Like Forever Elmwood is great at what they do. But in general we need to have a more diverse group to bring them together."

In addition to the foregoing data, focus group participants all agreed on the need for dialogue. The surrounding quotations were taken directly from the transcripts of those

"I believe that most people are just reaching and they are looking for resources. I know for myself even coming out the job market and I have obtained my degree and I've worked for different employers and I am not really satisfied. I am constantly looking for resource. Is there anyone out there who can provide resources. If someone can provide that type of training in the paper I am sure you'd get a lot of people to sign up."

focus groups:

"I am constantly fighting to find out how to get involved. How do I become a member of something? It's sad to say that I am not on any members lists right now. But it's like something inside of me wants to do something. I go to meetings and I am constantly going to get inside somewhere. I don't know if it's through volunteering or what it is. I have a problem with finding those networking opportunities. It's so important in today's world. Not just in Buffalo. If you work with people you can make the contacts."

# SOLUTIONS GENERATED BY THE COMMUNITY



Graduate students from the International Center for Studies in Creativity facilitated 3 solution groups. Each group discussed one of the top three generated potential solutions to these issues for the target population.

# Topic I. Career/Employment

Problem Statement: 21-30 year old women in Erie County are having difficulty finding employment.

Over 100 ideas were generated in this session; the participants subsequently narrowed the 100 down to the 3 they felt were the most promising. These 3 are outlined below.

#### Umbrella Ideas:

#### **Networking**

Use existing relationships (High School, College)
Volunteer to help others in the community and build on those networks.
Connect with older women in business, identify mentors.

#### Entrepreneurial Ventures

Identify ways to build a home-based business. Find information, resources and grants available for start up. Network with other business owners for ideas and tips. Identify talents and use them to your advantage.

#### Training and Research

Contact agencies in our community for career development.

Read the newspaper. What new businesses are coming to town? Look for new opportunities and send resumes early. Create a positive self-image. For example, dress appropriately, have well-groomed hair, no visible tattoos or piercings. Anticipate skills/expertise needed for future opportunities; acquire those skills with necessary training.

Develop an interesting resume to catch the employer's attention.

Review all aspects of the job expectations; including benefits, not just the salary.

#### Program Opportunities for Outreach

Job fairs for all levels of employment targeting young professional women.

Women in the Workplace Newsletter/ Magazine to publicize job training opportunities for women in the area.



# Topic II. Networking With Other Women

Problem Statement: In what ways might we network with women?

Over 125 ideas were generated in this session; the participants subsequently narrowed the 100 down to the 3 that were most promising. Those 3 are outlined below.

Participants identified the following tenets as important aspects of networking:

Build new relationships with others
Build social skills
Understand more about women
Improve communication skills
Learn to communicate well with women in particular
Utilize contacts to accomplish personal and professional goals

#### Umbrella Ideas:

#### Networking Opportunities

Develop a listserv through the Wb30 website to keep women informed of upcoming events. Work with existing women's organizations.

#### **Events**

Hold events for women and invite each to bring another woman as a guest.

Plan Potluck Dinner Parties and invite each guest to share their recipe and contact information.

Host theme socials each month with other women.

Hold sessions that focus on issues facing women at different phases of life (child care, home ownership, women with children, newly wed, life after divorce, etc.).

Hold a city-wide event for women to kick off a series of networking events (health & fitness, inspirations, career and resume preparation, finance management).

#### Personal Fulfillment

Write to journalistic columns about issues facing women.

Read women's magazines.

Organize travel tours or lunch groups for women.

Join or partner with cultural organizations to plan social events.

Introduce yourself to female neighbors and identify common interests.



## Topic III. Finance Management

Problem Statement: 21-30 year old women in Erie County find it difficult to achieve financial independence. Over 130 ideas were generated in this session; the participants subsequently narrowed the 130 down to 5 umbrella ideas, which are outlined below.

#### Umbrella Ideas:

#### Planning & Prioritization

Set up an automatic payroll deduction for savings and retirement.

Build on your financial education. For example, attend seminars given by finance professionals in your area.

Pay off at least some of your debt each month and limit credit card usage.

Cut coupons for additional savings (children can help cut them out as part of an activity).

Manage income effectively (Use 80% of income to pay bills, 10% to build savings, 10% for personal expenses).

Remind yourself constantly to raise money before you spend money.

Prepare a list of supplies or groceries needed before shopping.

#### Personal Needs Assessment

Determine the difference between your "needs" and your "wants".

Set both long- and short-term goals (celebrate milestones).

Ask yourself questions (Do I have this? What other things can I do with this money? Can I get a better deal on this item?). Answer honestly.

Spend time thinking about what money means to you.

#### Create a "Personal Financial Action Plan"

Know what you have at home and take inventory.

Determine ways you can reduce your spending (stay out of the mall, only buy necessary items).

Create a savings plan dictating how much to set aside from each paycheck.

Create personal expense sheet showing current debt and upcoming bills and installments.

#### **Networking**

Shop with friends and buy bulk together.

Seek out, and then follow, the advice of financial advisors.

Swap items, like clothing or household products, with friends and/or neighbors instead of buying new.

Build a support system with friends (be accountable to each other).

Organize events, workshops, seminars, etc.

Create a website forum to share successful practices.

Form a "Money Managing Group" to discuss finances with friends.

#### **Empowerment**

Empower yourself financially by cutting up non-essential credit cards (always keep one for emergencies).

Have a purchase-free week each month.

Buy bargain or sale items only.

Treat paying off a debt as a special occasion. Celebrate (without spending more money)!

### WHERE WILL THESE WOMEN BE LIVING IN 5 YEARS?

Respondents answered an open-ended item, "where do you see yourself living in five years and why?" A majority of the respondents did not offer any explanation. Many responses were only two or three words long. Cross tabulations were conducted, and significant findings are presented below.

### Respondents Planning to Leave Western NY

The majority of survey respondents indicated that they plan to stay in Western New York. The following illustrates the types of women who plan to leave town.

51% of city residents 43% of suburban residents 23% of residents of rural areas

53% of 21-25 year-olds 38% of 26-30 year-olds

50% of single respondents 40% of married and divorced respondents

- ⇒ A majority of the respondents who are planning to leave are people of color.
- ⇒ Of all the respondents planning to leave, a majority had at least some college education.

### Why Are They Leaving?

The most frequently cited reasons for leaving were:

Lack of jobs

Poor quality of life

Lack of economic and civic growth

"I want to make my life here.
I don't want to leave Buffalo. ...I'll have to leave
Buffalo and then come
back. I guess I am looking
for professional opportunities."

"It's really hard to stay focused and to stay positive when you are seeing so much negativity around you [in Buffalo]. And it's so funny because I don't even get a chance to, really. When you think positive to people in Buffalo they kinda shun you. ...And I am just stuck... my biggest thing is just staying focused."

-two different focus group participants



### Respondents indicated their sources for local news, which typically included:

**Buffalo News** 

Channels 2, 4, and 7, with a majority of respondents listing all three stations.

93.7, 98.5, and NPR/WBFO for news on the radio.

Internet, Artvoice, and word of mouth as other sources of news.

### RECOGNITION OF THE ERIE COUNTY COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

17% of the respondents have heard of the Commission on the Status of Women. Data suggests that a woman in Erie County is more likely to hear about the Commission if she:

- Lives in a rural area
- Is between the ages of 26-30
- Is married / has a life partner
- Has no children
- Has at least a bachelor's degree
- Identifies herself as White American

## IMPLICATIONS



### The Implications of this Report

### Now What?

People are leaving Erie County at alarming rates. The United States Census Bureau estimates that over 3,400 people left our county between 2003 and 2004; this is the third highest rate of exit in the state. Our county's current population is precious, and 6% of that valuable population is 21-30 year-old women. The 21-30 year-old female population is especially important to the future of Erie County. They have needs that must be addressed to show them it would be beneficial to stay.

The implications of our data could be crucial to Erie County. The 21-30 year-old female population in Erie County wants and needs help with the issues they face on a daily basis. This report will help to provide an understanding of those issues faced. Three major issues were identified through the survey and focus groups. The top three issues identified by this population include handling money/budget, finding career opportunities, and lack of networking opportunities.

The 21-30 year-old female population in Erie County spoke clearly and in depth about the issues that concern them most. Policy makers, service providers, and the for-profit sector should be making a concerted effort to listen to our population; an effort which must include creating a vehicle through which the communication may take place.

It is also crucial to invest in this population; this can be done by addressing the issues set forth earlier in this report. This investment is not necessarily financial. Instead, this population needs an investment of attention and volunteer resources. The County is in a dire financial situation, but existing services and programming opportunities can be, and should be, redirected towards new outcomes, which target this population.

It is important to point out that volunteerism *works*. The Wb30 initiative is completely volunteer-driven, with only minimal financial cost to cover staff support and printing. Volunteers of all ages, and both genders, carried out the entire Wb30 research project, and the subsequent production of the report, a zero cost to taxpayers. At this time of fiscal distress, we can still work towards solving the ever-present crisis of the brain drain from Erie County by utilizing this volunteer workforce to address the needs of our current residents.

Along these lines, we now set forth our recommendations, based on this data, for the next steps in retaining Erie County's 21-30 year-old female population. Our recommendations include: programming, improved methods of information dissemination, the utilization of existing partnerships and the creation of new ones, and an inventory of available resources in order to achieve our goals at little to no cost to the County.

Census data obtained from http://www.census.gov/popest/counties/tables/CO-EST2004-03-36.xls



### Opportunities for Collaboration

Erie County has hundreds of service agencies and organizations that meet the needs of Erie County residents. However, many, if not most, of these valuable resources go unused because residents do not know they exist. The business community has been a wonderful source of support and partnerships for programming designed to provide for those needs. In addition, the Erie County Commission on the Status of Women has been very successful in bringing together the public and private sectors, both for- profit and not-for-profit, to provide services for women. The larger community should expand these efforts by addressing the foregoing issues facing women in our county.

### Volunteerism

Those who volunteered to participate in the Wb30 project repeatedly asked for opportunities to volunteer. They asked for increased dissemination of current opportunities as well. Additionally, these women expressed a particular interest in civic volunteer opportunities relating to policy making. Such opportunities produce a sense of purpose and duty, build skills and resumes, and most importantly, provide a workforce and idea generation resource that will bring about vast improvements in our region without costing the taxpayers a dime.

### Proposed Programming

We propose a Wb30 Empowerment Symposium: a series of six workshops with presentations by community volunteers. We suggest the following subject areas:

Housing

Safe practices for renting/purchasing a home Maintaining your home on a tight budget Career Development Networking and Mentorship Fitness and Health Mind and Spirit

### Access to Information

We propose a Wb30 Resource Guide: a pamphlet listing resources and service providers in our community that address the issues identified in our report. This guide should contain telephone numbers and addresses as well as websites, for those women who do not have access to the Internet. Copies of the pamphlet should be distributed at public locations such as medical centers, colleges, government offices, malls, etc.

### Conclusion

In addition to all of the foregoing, we also recommend further research on this population, to be done at least every three years. Further research would bring to light new issues that dissipate as our community evolves over the next few years. It would also provide us with bright minds and fresh ideas, allowing Wb30 and its progeny to stay up to date and ensure our efforts reach throughout the target population. Thank you for your time. We look forward to working with you to improve our community.

# APPENDIX A



### Unattended Survey Box

- Western New York Pride Center: 18 Trinity Place, Buffalo NY
- Jewish Community Center of Greater Buffalo: 787 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo NY
- **Buffalo State College**: 1300 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo NY
- Planned Parenthood of Buffalo and Erie County: 2697 Main Street, Buffalo NY
- Canisius College Women's Studies Department: 2001 Main Street, Buffalo NY
- Arte Brutale: 2329 Main Street, Buffalo NY
- Daemen College: 4380 Main Street, Amherst NY
- YWCA of Western New York: 190 Franklin Street, Buffalo NY
- Talking Leaves Bookstores: 591 Elmwood Avenue and 3158 Main Street, Buffalo NY
- Leadership Buffalo: 237 Main Street, Buffalo NY
- Subway Restaurant: 1124 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo NY
- Starbucks Coffee: 933 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo NY
- Jim's Steakout: 938 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo NY
- State University of New York at Buffalo Women's Studies Department: 712 Clemens Hall, Amherst NY
- St. Phillips Community Center: 15 Fernhill Avenue, Buffalo NY
- Valley Community Association Food Bank: 93 Leddy Street, Buffalo NY
- Lt. Col. Matt Urban Human Services Center of Western New York: 1081 Broadway Avenue, Buffalo NY
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Erie County: 282 Babcock Street, Buffalo NY
- Literacy Volunteers of Buffalo and Erie County, Inc.: 1313 Main Street, Buffalo NY
- Hispanics United of Buffalo: 254 Virginia Street, Buffalo NY
- Half & Half Trading Co.: 1088 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo NY
- Rath Building Lobby & 3rd Floor bridge to Main Place Mall: 95 Franklin Street, Buffalo NY

### Attended Survey Table

- Kenny Rogers Concert Shea's Buffalo Center for the Performing Arts: 646 Main Street, Buffalo NY
- Bare Naked Ladies Concert Shea's Buffalo Center for the Performing Arts: 646 Main Street, Buffalo NY
- **Broadway Market**: 999 Broadway Avenue, Buffalo NY
- Winter Wonderland Olmsted Parks Conservancy: Delaware Park, Buffalo NY
- Eastern Hills Mall: 4545 Transit Road, Williamsville NY
- St. Adalbert's Annual Holiday Gifts Bank: 6200 Broadway Street, Buffalo NY
- New York State Assemblyman Sam Hoyt's Annual Christmas Singalong Unitarian Universalist Church: 695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo NY
- Spot Coffee: 765 Elmwood Avenue and 227 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo NY

### Appendix B



### Erie County Commission on the Status of Women Women below 30 Initiative Survey

As a woman in Erie County, your voice is important to us. Please take a moment to complete this survey and let us know how we can best address your needs!



	I live in		The country commission on the c
Age (circle one)	Town	/Village/City	\ (@WII/2\on a
Under 21	21-25	26-30	Over 30
Marital Status (circle	one)		
Single	Married / Life Partner	Divorced	Widowed
Dependent Children (	circle one)		
0	1	2	3 or more
Highest Level of Educ	ation Achieved (circle one)	)	
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade or Less	High School / GED Son	me College Associate's	Bachelor's Graduate / Professional
How would you best d	lescribe your race/ethnicity	y?	
Which of the following	g issues do you face? (circle	e up to five)	
Buying a home	Domestic Violence	Substance Abuse	Leadership Opportunities
Finding an Apartment	Finding a Job	Career Development	Continuing Education
Sexual Health	Racial Stereotyping	Sexual Orientation	Safety
Health Insurance	Being a parent	Debt	Networking
Being a Single Mother	Paying for Education	Legal Services	Earning Enough Money to Pay My Bills
Gender Stereotyping	Other:		
Where do you see you	rself living in 5 years and	why?	
Where do you get you	r local news? (fill out as ma	any as apply)	
Newspaper / Magazine	(name of publication)	TV:	(name of station)
Radio:	e of station)	Other:	
`	,	7	
Have you ever heard o	ot the Commission on the S	Status of Women? (circle or	ne)

Thank you very much for taking our survey!

No

Yes

# Appendix C



### **INTRODUCTION: 10 MINUTES**

Good (morning/afternoon/evening), welcome to this Wb30 focus group. The Erie County Commission on the Status of Women needs your help to determine the needs of young women in Erie County, so we've convened this focus group to discuss the issues that you face on a daily basis. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work at \_\_\_\_\_. I heard about Wb30 on the radio, and I attended a Moderator Training Workshop so that I could volunteer for Wb30 as a Moderator. It's my job to make sure that everyone's voice is heard, because it is essential that you all participate. During this focus group, I will ask a series of questions and encourage the group to respond to them in an organized manner. Feel free to ask each other questions to clarify or probe views, but please refrain from engaging in individual debate. In order to keep track of what everyone says, and make sure we don't misrepresent your opinions, we will be tape-recording this session. Although you may use first names or a nicknames, please do not use any last names or other identifying information, and please do not use the name of your employer. Don't worry – if you make a mistake, we will remove that information from the written transcription of the conversation, to protect your anonymity. We hope you can stay for the entire time, and that you will remain seated for the entire time. But we certainly do understand if you have to get up to go to the bathroom, or if you need to leave early. If that's the case, please leave as quietly as possible, so that the other participants don't get too distracted. Please turn off any noise-making devices such as cell phones or beepers. If you have not yet filled out your nametag, please do so, with either your first name, or a nick-name. The paper and pencil in front of you is there so that you can jot down ideas or questions, to prevent you from forgetting what you were going to say. In order to make everyone in this room feel safe to share her opinions, we need to set up a couple ground rules for this conversation. First and foremost, only one person may speak at a time. Also, if you look towards (the wall, the blackboard, etc.) you will see the four golden rules of a focus group. These principles are so important that we put them up on the wall for everyone to see throughout the conversation. 1) **Honesty**: The success of this group and the Wb30 project depends on your honesty. 2) **Respect**: Please respect those women around you, and respect the rules of this group. 3) **Dialogue, not Debate**: While Debate implies a right answer, and a wrong answer, Dialogue allows for many different valid opinions, with no wrong answer. 4) Your opinion matters: Speak up, and tell me what you think, because your opinion is valued and important to this project. Before we turn the tape-recorder on, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Please share with us your first name or nickname, what you do for a living if you are employed or what you would like to be doing, and \_\_\_\_\_.

### **QUESTIONS: 45 MINUTES**

dress each other by the names on your name tags.

### 15 MINUTES

(round robin) What single issue that you face in your daily life as a woman in Erie County matters most to you? Discuss specific issues, ask for clarification from people.

I will also introduce today's guests, \_\_\_\_\_, who are here to \_\_\_\_\_.

"What other issues do you need help with? For example, if I were a 65 year old woman, I would need help with issues like access to information about senior citizen discounts, or how to get on Medicare."

We will now start the tape recorder. Please refrain from using any last names or identifying information, but you may ad-



### 15 MINUTES

(show of hands) Who plans to move somewhere OUTSIDE of Erie County within the next five years? Ask specific people why they raised or didn't raise their hands.

"Starting with those people who did not raise their hands, what would make you change your mind and get you to leave town?" "For those of you who did raise your hands, what would make you change your mind and get you to stay?"

### 15 MINUTES

Who are the people you interact with most frequently?

Do you have connections? Describe your networks.

Where do you meet people to make professional connections? Where do you meet people to make personal connections?

Are most of your friends here in Erie County, or outside of Erie County? How did that come to be?

### WRAP-UP: 7 MINUTES

We've come to the end of our session. Are there any last comments you would like to add that you didn't get a chance to add in any of the three sections?

[pause for comments]

If there are no more comments, I will now pass out the survey we gave during the month of December. Please take two minutes to fill it out. When you are finished, please look up so I know you are done.

[while they are filling it out] If you enjoyed participating in this focus group, and are interested in getting helping brainstorm ways to address the issues we've discussed and solve these problems, you can sign up to participate in a solutions brainstorming group happening in February. The signup sheet is located \_\_\_\_\_\_. Also, please tell your friends and family about Wb30, because we still need more women to sign up to participate in focus groups. I would like to end the session by going around the room and having each participant share one good thing that you are taking away from this discussion.

[round robin]

I'll be around to answer any questions you might have about the Commission, the Wb30 initiative, or the focus group process. We also welcome any comments or suggestions you have about this focus group. A copy of the report generated from these focus groups will be available online at the Commission's website in late April. Thank you all for coming, and have a great (day/night). [stand by the door and thank each person]

## APPENDIX D



### Print

- University at Buffalo Spectrum: November 15 2004
- Bee Publications: December 2004
- La Ultima Hora: December 2004
- Outcome Buffalo: Paid Advertisement December 2004
- North Buffalo Rocket: "The Grapevine" December 1 2004
- Akron Bugle: December 2 2004
- <u>Buffalo State College Record</u>: December 9 2004
- <u>Buffalo Business First</u> "People on the Move" December 10-16 2004, March 18-24 2005
- Artvoice: "Bulletins" November 18 2004, December 2 2004
- WNY Pride Center Nucleus: January 2005
- Buffalo Criterion: March 5-11 2005 Vol. 80 No.9
- The Buffalo News: "Honor Roll" March 20 2005

### Radio

- WBLK: "Public Service Announcement" November 2004, December 2004
- WBFO: "Public Service Announcement" November 2004, December 2004

### **Television**

• <u>WB49</u>: Evening News December 20 2004